

# California



CALIFORNIA'S EARLY LEARNING AGENDA IS based on four essential components: (1) building a high-quality early learning system, (2) connecting early learning with K12, (3) increasing access to quality programs, and (4) providing comprehensive support for the development of the whole child.

California will build upon existing state efforts to support the work of a network of local consortia; in turn, these consortia will reach out to and mentor other programs and organizations that can benefit from their experience. The state has already created the nationally recognized Early Learning Foundations program, which will be the guide for the tiered quality rating and improvement system (TQRIS), ensuring that all programs share a common language and are aiming for a common set of outcomes for young children. The goal of the consortia is to ensure that children in California have access to high-quality programs so that they thrive in their early learning settings and succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

Each consortium will implement a TQRIS that incorporates the evidence-based common elements and tools in the Quality Continuum Framework. Each will utilize a rating system that implements a set of common tools in the framework, establish benchmarks and tiers of quality, and develop an action plan that explains how RTT-ELC funds will support capacity-building activities and how existing resources will be redirected in support of and to sustain the goals of the plan.

California addressed the following Focused Investment Areas in its application:

*Early Learning  
and  
Development  
Standards*

**(C)(1) Developing and using statewide, high-quality early learning and development standards.** California's Infant/Toddler Learning and Development Foundations and Preschool Learning Foundations have been developed through the work of nationally known researchers and expert

## Applicant

Office of the Governor,  
State of California

## Lead Agency

California Department of  
Education

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## Total Federal Award

\$53,372,935

## Grant Period

January 1, 2012 –  
December 31, 2015

The Race to the Top – Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) discretionary grant program supports states in building statewide systems that raise the quality of early learning and development programs and increase access to high-quality programs for children with high needs, so that all children enter kindergarten ready to succeed.

Information in this abstract is drawn from the state's RTT-ELC grant application.

practitioners and include all the core domains of school readiness. California has developed an early learning system that includes guidelines for programs, targeted support, and professional development. Grant funds will help local programs implement the foundations and utilize the accompanying resources for meaningful program improvement.

*Health  
Promotion*

**(C)(3) Identifying and addressing the health, behavioral, and developmental needs of children with high needs to improve school readiness.** California has developed a set of integrated health promotion tools and resources in the areas of wellness, safety, oral health, mental health, and nutrition. Grant funds will support key consortia strategies such as having early educators conduct developmental screenings and incorporating health teaching into the learning that occurs in other educational domains. Each consortium will also incorporate tools for identifying developmentally appropriate strategies to address social-emotional health in a systemic way.

*Support  
Workforce  
Improvement*

**(D)(2) Supporting early childhood educators in improving their knowledge, skills, and abilities.** California will use grant funds to expand the number of early childhood courses offered in community colleges that are aligned throughout the community college system. This strategy will strengthen the quality of these courses by linking them to the rest of the early learning curriculum, while broadening educational opportunities available to the early learning workforce. Grant funds will also support local programs wishing to develop the competencies of staff through web-based resources, mentoring, and the development of learning communities.

*Kindergarten  
Entry  
Assessment*

**(E)(1) Understanding the status of children's learning and development at kindergarten entry.** In 2010, California released its preschool and infant/toddler assessments, which are aligned with the Preschool Learning Foundations. A current strategy is the development of its school readiness instrument, which will measure kindergarten readiness across multiple domains. Study of this assessment will be completed in the spring of 2012 and the assessment instrument will be finalized in August 2012. California will train the consortia to use the assessment in its first year but ultimately make it available to all LEAs in the state. Grant funds will also be used to modify the state's longitudinal data system to accommodate and share kindergarten readiness data.

California has 1,345,469 children, birth to kindergarten entry, from low-income families. The state reports that it is leveraging \$549,068 in other funding sources to support this effort.